

ELECTIONS COMMISSION
City and County of San Francisco



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From: Robin M. Stone, President of the San Francisco Elections Commission

Date: April 20, 2023

Re: Letter of Support for AB 1248

I am writing on behalf of the San Francisco Elections Commission to ask the Board of Supervisors to send a letter of support for [AB 1248](#), introduced by Assembly Member Bryan on February 16. This bill requires that independent redistricting commissions be established for all local jurisdictions with populations over 300,000, including charter cities, in time for the next redistricting cycle. It builds on requirements established by the [FAIR MAPS Act of 2019](#) and incorporates best practices from the California Citizens Redistricting Commission (CRC), which is widely recognized as the “gold standard” for fair, transparent and community-engaged redistricting. While San Francisco was a pioneer, establishing the Redistricting Taskforce (RDTF) a decade before the CRC, it would likely have to comply with these provisions if passed due to its political appointment process. As a charter city, San Francisco was exempt from the FAIR MAPS Act and did not take advantage of its guidance during the 2021-22 cycle.

As the body charged with ensuring free, fair and functional elections in the City and the only non-interested appointing authority for the RDTF, the Elections Commission has been evaluating possible reforms to San Francisco’s local redistricting process. If districts are drawn for political purposes rather than to ensure fair representation, it threatens the integrity

of our elections. We acted in response to demands by the public that we remove our appointees based on accusations of political interference in an independent redistricting process, community input ignored, unclear redistricting criteria, and lack of transparency, among others. After a 7-hour special hearing on April 8, 2022, the Commission allowed its appointees to remain to finish their task, which was finally completed two weeks past the statutory deadline with a bare majority vote on the final map. San Francisco was one of only two jurisdictions in the state that missed its redistricting deadline, but was not alone in controversy, as outlined in a recent report, [The Promise of Fair Maps, California's 2020 Local Redistricting Cycle](#). The Elections Commission launched its Redistricting Initiative [link to latest plan] in June 2022 in the hopes of reforming the RDTF and its processes for the future.

Led by Commissioners Cynthia Dai and Renita LiVolvsi, the Elections Commission listened to hours of expert testimony about best practices in state and local redistricting last year, including from exemplars like the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission and Long Beach Independent Redistricting Commission, and past RDTF members. While the Commission is still considering and consolidating a final set of reforms to propose to the Board for a 2024 Charter Amendment, many of the key recommendations from good government groups are already included in AB 1248. These include requirements for an open application process, recruitment of a large applicant pool reflecting the City's diversity, disqualification for conflicts of interest, a non-political selection process, and a ban on ex parte communication. In the coming months, we will forward our complete analysis and recommendations for future RDTFs. Meanwhile, we urge the Board to proactively lend its support for the proposed legislation as a signal of San Francisco's long tradition of supporting democratic reforms in general and specifically, independent redistricting by and for the people.

Sincerely,

Robin M. Stone
President, San Francisco Elections Commission

cc: Mayor London Breed
Members of the San Francisco Elections Commission
San Francisco Director of Elections John Arntz
Deputy City Attorneys Bradley Russi and Ana Flores

Attachment: AB 1248 Fact Sheet